

* To the DOE, EPA, NRC and others involved in the Yucca Mountain Project:

As a native Nevadan, former journalist and current public relations professional, I've been following Nevada's fight against the Yucca Mountain Project my entire adult life. After more than 25 years of this, I'm more convinced than ever that the Yucca Mountain Project is bad for Nevada, bad public policy for America and dangerous for future generations. This ill-fated project should be killed immediately for more reasons than I have time to outline here.

Just to hit the big-picture highlights, Nevada was obviously targeted for political purposes back in the early 1980s, when the state had even less political clout than it has now. At the time, perceptions in Congress must have made this site in the Nevada desert look like an easy choice. After all, Nevada had allowed the U.S. government to test and blow up nuclear bombs at the Nevada Test Site since the 1950s. So, it must have seemed like an easy sell to leaders and citizens in more populated states with nuclear power plants (Nevada has no nuclear power, by the way) to bury the most deadly substance known to man in Yucca Mountain, part of the federally owned test site but only about 90 miles from America's boomtown, Las Vegas.

Over the years, studies by scientists working with Nevada and working independently of the state have shown Yucca Mountain to be a bad place to store nuclear waste. As it turns out, Nevada's experts now believe the moisture and heat inside the porous mountain will be more damaging and cause more radiation to enter the environment than if we left the waste where it is now and stored it for the foreseeable future above ground at the nuclear power plants and other sites where it's generated.

Of course, this fight has never been about science or doing the right thing. It's more about politics and perception. We here in Nevada understand why most states want to get rid of their nuclear waste.

And, ironically enough, it looks like that's how Nevada may eventually stop this project - through changing congressional and presidential politics and the growing perception that the DOE is not competent, that transporting all this waste across the country for decades is not safe, and that this policy and this site are fatally flawed.

It's becoming almost comical to see how the DOE, seemingly in cahoots with the EPA, NRC and other federal agencies, persists in pushing this project no matter what problems arise. Every time a major flaw in the process or the project is brought to light, the DOE simply changes its own rules to make the project fit its purposes.

Fortunately, Nevada's not buying what the feds have been selling. A recent public opinion poll by the Reno Gazette-Journal echoes what the state's annual polls have shown for years, proving that Nevadans remain as opposed as ever to this project, with more than 70 percent adamantly opposed and an increasing number saying this issue has a substantial impact on their vote for president.

Of course, on the political front, having longtime dump foe Nevada Sen. Harry Reid now serving as Senate majority leader should also accelerate the demise of this project. Maybe America's next president will listen to this logic and kill the Yucca Mountain Project. If the next president is a Democrat, that should be a forgone conclusion, since every candidate has gone on record saying they will kill it. If a Republican candidate wins, perhaps he'll be forced to take a similar

If anyone in a position of influence actually reads this, please do what you can to pull the plug now, before we waste billions more of our federal tax dollars on a dangerous project.

Do the right thing. Leave nuclear waste where it's generated and secure it on site. Put the untold billions the federal government would have wasted on Yucca into useful science that will someday find a better way to use the waste without burying it forever in Nevada.]

-- George McCabe
